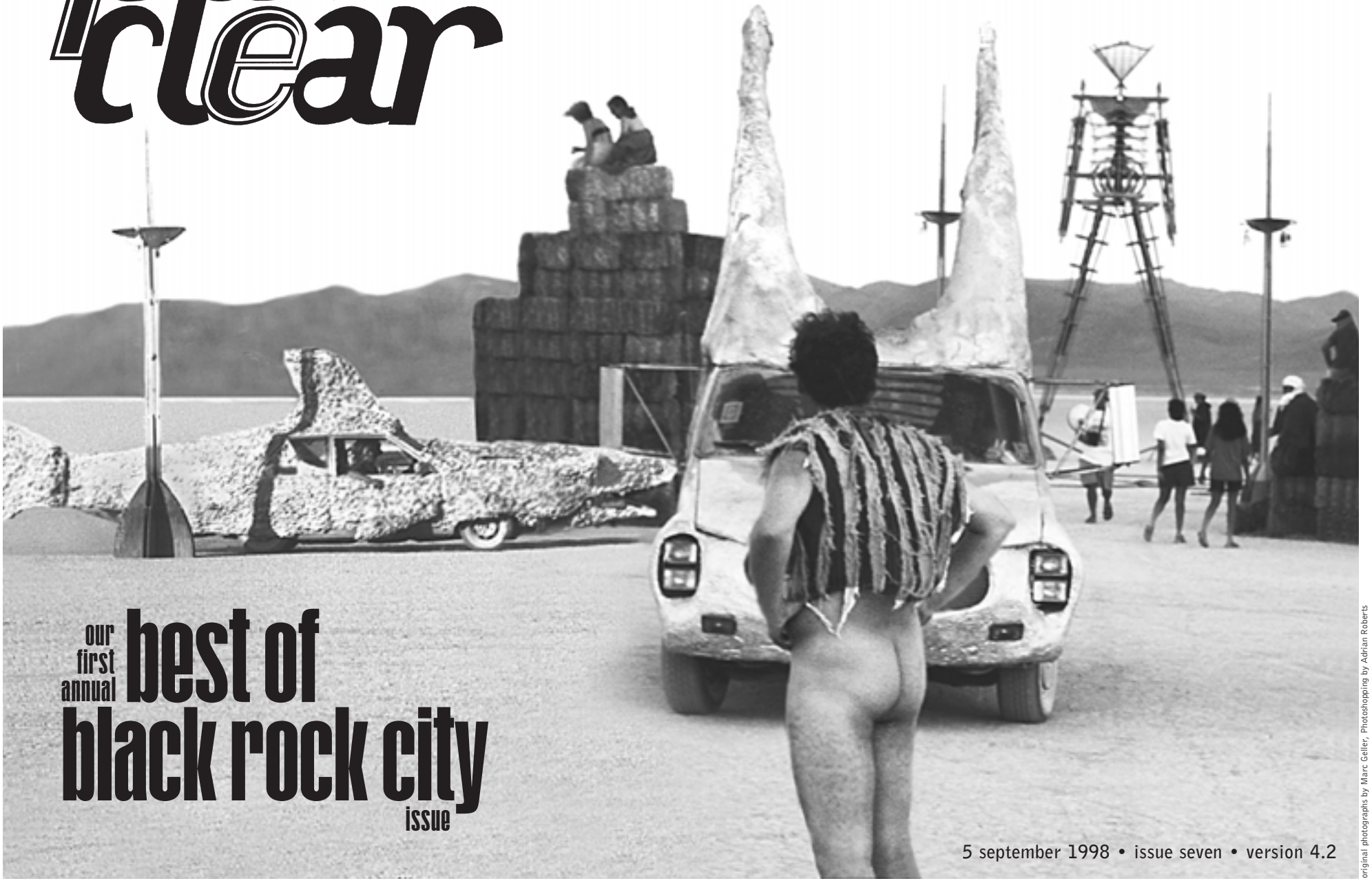
piss clear

Black Rock City's only alternative newspaper



our first annual best of black rock city issue

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original photographs by Marc Geller, Photoshopping by Adrian Roberts

Proud to be a Spectator! *by SWIRLY RAT JR.*

Swirly!

Heather Shirkey

last rant

Every year as I get ready for Burning Man, I am invariably reminded of the First Commandment of Burning Man: There Shalt be No Spectators. And I say to myself the same thing I always say: "Ha ha! Yeah, right!"

Keeping in mind that this just may be some sort of defense mechanism on *my* part for never having my shit together enough to do something cool, I decided to recline on my chaise lounge and simply admit to myself that I *am* a Spectator—and proud of it, dammit!

I know there are others out there like me. I will be ashamed no more. Now it's time to tell *my* story, in the hopes that Spectators everywhere can tailgate with pride, instead of having to wear last year's Halloween costume all weekend, existing in four days of Hypocritical Hell. Here is why I am proud to be a Spectator:

I have a life!

Yes, it's true. I have more important things to do than spend an entire year—or even a month for that matter—planning for Burning Man. Hell, *I'm* not the one organizing this thing. I don't need more complications in my life like, who's got the drivers license for the jet car, or how are we going levitate the stage when the metal drum cover band shows up. And I definitely don't need to network at a zillion BM parties before the event even happens.

I am poor

One year, I was all set to rent a Hummer and a bunch of hunky Marines to help me survive in the harsh desert environment. Instead, I ended up in a pup tent, sharing a space blanket with another person and their dog.

I make less money that anyone I know and I'm going to use this space to bitch about it. I am way below the poverty line, yet I still go to Burning Man—which in reality is probably just plain stupid. Let's face it: this thing costs money. I can barely afford to be here, much less afford to build some grand art installation or make a theme camp. And don't give me any crap about how I could make sculptures out of beer cans, or that "just being here is participating." Because that brings me to my next point:

Just being here is *not* participating

If you believe this then chances are, you're a Spectator in Participator's clothing (or lack there of, whichever the case may be). Just being here is as participatory as playing videogames all day, and then saying you spent the afternoon street fighting or driving a tank. Mascara doesn't count as body paint, and going four days without shaving doesn't make you an activist.

Look around—how many people right now are on their way to something, or staring at an art installation, or watching a performance? You know what that's called? You got it—it's called spectating, and they're Spectators. Everyone is watching everyone else, so everyone is actually more of a spectator than a participant.

It doesn't add up

Let's look at the numbers. There are at least 10,000 people here—probably more, but for the sake of argument, let's say 10,000—and about 400 theme camps, each with maybe 10 people, give or take. So far, we have a total of about 4000 people putting up structures or at least some really fancy tents. Now let's throw in some bands, artists, clowns, drunks—no wait, I mean performance artists—and general freaks running around. Let's say 1000 people. That gives us only 5000 people. Getting the picture? That leaves us with only 50 percent of the Black Rock City population doing something, while the other half sit on their asses drinking beer instead of water, changing diapers, and trying to get laid. Oh yeah, and spectating! It should be noted that I am excluding media-types from the numbers here, as I don't consider them people.

Had enough? I know I have. It's time to end this hypocritical dogma! Be proud to be a Spectator! I am here to tell you that you are not alone. There are many of us out here. Let's celebrate our keen ability to have fun by letting someone else do all the work. Set up the chairs so you can watch the Burn from the safety of your own "backyard." That way you can knock back a few just like you do when you watch TV. I know that's what I'm going to do.